

RFK Called Upset By CIA-Mafia Ties

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Former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy was "perturbed" when he learned in 1962 that the Central Intelligence Agency and the Mafia were working together, but he appeared indifferent to their aborted plot to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, a former CIA official said yesterday.

Kennedy was angry at the CIA's involving itself with the Mafia "because at the time he was very strong on crime-busting," former CIA general counsel Lawrence R. Houston told reporters. When Kennedy was briefed on the plot to kill Castro, Houston said, "he didn't seem very perturbed about Castro. At least, he didn't say anything."

What Kennedy did say, according to Houston, was, "If you're going to have anything to do with the Mafia again, come to me first."

Houston, the CIA's chief lawyer for 26 years until his retirement in 1973, appeared before a House subcommittee yesterday to answer questions about a 20-year

agreement between the CIA and the Justice Department that let the CIA decide when its personnel should be prosecuted for breaking the law.

Although questions of possible illegal conduct should have been referred to him under CIA procedures, Houston testified, he learned recently of several illegal activities carried on by the CIA.

Houston's comments about the aborted Mafia-CIA plot to kill Castro in 1930-61 represented the fullest public account yet made.

Houston said he approached the Justice Department when one of its investigations into an associate of Mafia figures, Sam Giancana and Johnny Roselli, threatened to reveal the plot. By that time, April, 1962, the plot had been aborted by unknown officials in the CIA, Houston said.

He said he had been told the plot to kill Castro was shaped in 1960, although

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how it got started was "a little vague" and he said he did not know who ordered it.

When the discussion came up, Houston said, the head of the CIA's Office of Security, Col. Sheffield Edwards, said, "I've got a fellow with some interesting contacts." That person, Houston said, was Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent and then an associate of billionaire Howard Hughes. Either through Maheu or by him, contact was made with Roselli, Houston said. The first contact was made by persons purporting to represent business interests so Roselli would not know he was dealing with the CIA, Houston said.

Ultimately, however, the plan to kill Castro — which was to have been coordinated with the Bay of Pigs invasion — was called off. Houston said he was not aware until recently that the plot had been reinstated after his conversation with Robert Kennedy.

Houston's account was heatedly denied by Herbert J. Miller Jr., assistant attorney general in charge of the Criminal Division in 1962

and a friend of Robert Kennedy.

Miller said he talked to Houston but never about a plot involving the CIA and the Mafia. Nor did he accept Houston's statement that Kennedy had been told. "If Bob Kennedy had known about some plot to assassinate Castro involving the CIA and the Mafia, he would have told me about it and I know damn well he never told me about it," Miller said. "It just couldn't happen that this would come up and he wouldn't tell me. It just couldn't happen."

In answer to questions from Chairman Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.) and other committee members, Houston testified that he learned only recently of several illegal CIA

activities—including opening mail and conducting domestic surveillance against American citizens.

Under a 1954 agreement, the CIA was allowed to determine when to tell the Justice Department of violations of law by its employees. Abzug said the agreement, which apparently was forgotten by the Justice Department until last December, was "improper, probably illegal and certainly a dereliction of duty" by the department.

Abzug released a letter from the current CIA general counsel, John S. Warner, giving brief descriptions of 20 cases that were referred to the Justice Department by the CIA for consideration between 1954 and 1975.

One case, according to the

letter, "involved a murder which took place outside the United States. Allegations were made that two agency employees helped dispose of the body. The (Deputy chief for intelligence) discussed the case with the Attorney General in October, 1955. The Attorney General's office did not take any action 'due to the legal jurisdictional restrictions involved.' No further details of the incident were immediately available.

The subcommittee also heard testimony from Deputy Assistant Attorney General Kevin T. Maroney, who spent 19 years in the Justice Department's Internal Security Division and now is involved with others in the department's inquiries into the CIA and the FBI.

Asked if he did not have a "problem" investigating agencies with which he had worked, Maroney denied knowing that any information he received had been illegally obtained. "When the Attorney General acts," Maroney said, "he'll know my background. If that's a problem, I assume he'll take it into account."